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In the Book Notices, Stratmann points out a number of errors in Prof. Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, Part II, and Elze's *Notes on Elizabethan Dramatists*. (Halle, 1880) is favorably noticed by O. S. Seemann. The criticisms of *Lehr- und Übungsbücher für die englische Sprache* occupy some twenty pages.

The Miscellanea include Notes on the Dublin MS. of the Alliterative Romance of Alexander, by J. H. Hessels; on Havelok the Dane and the Norse King Olaf Kuaran, by Prof. Storm; and on An Unknown MS. of the Ancrén Riwlé, by Kölbing, besides the usual schedule of Lectures on English Philology and the *Zeitschriftenschau*.

ALBERT S. COOK.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE PHILOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S ENGLISH DICTIONARY.

A recent visit to the Scriptorium at Mill Hill, where the Philological Society's English Dictionary is gradually assuming form and consistency under the hands of its indefatigable editor, Dr. J. A. H. Murray, enables me to lay before the readers of the JOURNAL a few facts regarding its recent progress, by way of supplement to the information which, through various channels, has already found its way to the American public.

The Scriptorium itself is a modest building enough, consisting of a single long, low room adjoining the editor's residence; but the walls of this room are literally lined with the bundles of written slips already sent in by readers; these are arranged in alphabetical order by trained helpers, as soon as practicable after their reception, and are then consigned to the pigeon-holes, which cover the whole available wall-space from the floor as high as the hand can reach. The number of quotations already returned is, according to the report of Dr. Murray before the Philological Society, not far from 657,000, while blank slips have been issued to the number of 817,625. These slips, if laid end to end, would, it is calculated, extend over a distance of 87 miles, and, allowing only half a minute of the editor's time to each one, the preliminary inspection and disposition of them would require nearly three working years.

The authors represented in the Reference Index already number 2700, and the titles of separate works amount, in the aggregate, to 4500.

The number of readers at present enrolled is over 800, of whom 510 are still engaged in their work, while the remainder have either finished the books they accepted or have temporarily ceased to read.

It is gratifying to learn that America has responded with marked promptitude and enthusiasm to the appeals which have been circulated by the Society throughout the English-speaking world, and that the coöperation of American readers has been of essential service in carrying the work thus far

onward toward completion. The laborious task of receiving the applications from American volunteers, and of conducting the necessary correspondence with them, was assumed, at the request of the English Philological Society, by Prof. March, of Lafayette College; and they have since, in recognition as well of his other conspicuous service to English philology as of his satisfactory discharge of this particular trust, conferred upon him the highest honor in their gift.

Among the three gentlemen, two of them Englishmen, who up to this time have done one-ninth of all the reading, the foremost is Rev. J. Pierson, of Ionia, Michigan, who has sent in slips to the number of 25,830, including a complete vocabulary of American lumber terms, and a large number of extremely important quotations from rare books. Glancing down the list of books and readers, which will occupy something like 400 pages of the dictionary, one can easily convince himself that the above-mentioned names by no means stand alone. The contributions of Prof. G. M. Philips, of Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, and of Henry Phillips, Jr., Ph.D., of Philadelphia, though less numerous than those of Mr. Pierson (6500 and 7650 respectively), will compare favorably in quality with any that have yet been received. The list of deserving American workers is by no means exhausted, but as full justice will be done in the columns of the dictionary to each individual reader, there is no occasion for entering into further particulars within the compass of a short notice.

At a meeting of the Philological Society in June last, which the writer had the privilege of attending, a specimen sheet of the dictionary was presented for criticism and suggestion. In the preparation of this sheet the editor had availed himself of the material at his command to work out, with some thoroughness, the history of the word *alms*. As this article, if due allowances be made for unavoidable though comparatively trifling differences in the size and character of type, will serve, better than the most labored explanation, to show the nature and amount of the information which the dictionary will furnish, it is here reprinted as far as section 2. The columns of the reprint are about one-fifth narrower than the original:

ALMS (aHmz), *n.* Forms 1, **aelmyse**; 1-3, **aelmesse**; (2-3, **aelmissee, elmissee**; 2-4, **elmesse**); 2-6, **almesse**; (2-4, **almissee**; 4, **alemesse, almesse**); 2-7, **almes**; (2, **elmes**; 3, **almys**; 4, **almis**; 5, **elmys**; 6, **allmes**); 7-9, **alms**. Pl. wanting; since 7 the sing. *alms* has also been used as pl.; formerly 2, **aelmessen**; 2-3, **almessen**; 4-6, **almessis, almesses**. [O. E. *aelmyse*, obl. cases and pl. *aelmyssan*, cogn. w. Norse *almusa* (Dan. *almisse*, Swed. *almosa*), O. Fr. *ielmissee*, O. Sax. *alamōsna*, O. H. G. *alamuosan* (M. H. G. *almuosen*, Mod. G. *almosen*), pointing to a com. O. Teut. **alemosin* or **alimosin*, ad. pop. Lat. **alimōsina* (whence Prov. and O. Sp. *almosna*, O. Fr. *almosne*, It. *imosina*), a per-

version (due perhaps to mental association with *ālimōnia*) of *elimosina*, *elemosina*, orig. *ēlēmosīna* (3rd c. Tertull.) ad. Gr. *ἐλεημοσύνη*, 'compassionateness' (n. of qual. f. *ἐλεῖμων*, 'compassionate,' f. *ἐλεος*, 'compassion, mercy.') For the *y* in O. E. *aelmyssan* from **alimosina*, cf. *mynete*, *mylen*, repres. Lat. *moneta*, *molina*.]

1. Charitable relief of the poor; charity; originally and especially as a religious duty, or good work; const. with *do*, *make*, *work*. Afterwards applied especially to the material substance of the relief, and const. with *give*, *bestow*, etc.

a. As an abst. or collect. without plural.

c. 1000. O. E. GOSP. *Matt.* vi. 3, *Ponne þu*

Pine ælmesseñ dō. *Rushw.* *Ib.* Ponne
 Pu wirce ælmesse. c. 1175. *Lamb. Hom.*
 Pine elmisce Pe ðu dest . . . Hu miht ðu don
 Pine elmesce? *Ib.* 137, Al ðe ælmesse ðe
 men deð. c. 1200. *Trin. Coll. Hom.* 29,
 Fenne ðu ælmesse makest. *Ib.* 131, Ure
 gode dedes, on elmes, and on oðre ðinge.
Ib. 157, On oðer wise man silleð his ælmes.
 1250. Bp. GROSTESTE, *R. for Ord. Fam.* in
Dom. Arch. III. 82, that youre ælmys be
 kepyd & . . . departyd to poure men. 1297.
 R. GLO. 330, Of hy ælmesse large & fre.
 1340. *Ayenb.* 11, prede makeþ of ælmesse
 senne, and of virtues vices. 1366. MAUN-
 DER, 149, To gader hem precyouse stones and
 perles, be weye of ælmesse. 138. WYCLIF,
Apol. iii, Wil ðu not do ælmis of oker and
 usur; ðat is, do not swilk defautis to do ælmis
 perof. 1386. CHAUCER, *Man of Law's T.*,
 Hir hond, mynistr of freedom and ælmesse.
 c. 1406. SIR J. FORTESCUE, *Abs. & Lin. Mon.*
 142, He schal do thereby dayly more Almes
 than schal be done in all the Foundations.
 1581. JN. MARBECK, *Notes & Com. Pl.* 27, This
 word Almes importeth as much as mercie.
 1587. A. FLEMING, *Cont. Holinsh. Chr.* III.
 1312 1/2, The distributors of the ælmesse to the
 poore. 1665. PIERCE, *Diary*, IV. 189, To
 be buried at the ælmes of the parish. 1764.
 R. BURN, *Hist. Poor Laws*, 189, He puts his
 ælms with his own hand into a long purse or
 bag. 1816. J. WILSON, *City of the Plague*,
 I. 1. 202, Do you pity me? Then give me
 ælms.

b. As *sing.* (with plural, *Obs.* since
 6). A charitable donation, a gift of
 charity, a benefaction.

c. 1160. *Statt. Gosp.* vi. 2, ðanne Pu ðine
 ælmesen style. c. 1375. WYCLIF, *Anticrist*
M. 131, Crist's ælmes . . . was encresed to
 twelve leful. 1377. LANGLE, *P. Pl.* B. xv.

306, ðat Freres wolde forsake hir ælmeses.
 c. 1450. PRECOCK, *Repressor*, 550 (bis),
 Receyve Myche and grete Almessis. 1535.
 M. COVERDALR, *Bible*, Actis iii. 3, He desyred
 to receaue an ælmesse. 1541. RT. BARNES,
Workes (1573), 274f 1, Our eatyng, our dryn-
 kyng, our ælmeses, our prayers. 1563.
Myrroure for Mag., (Jane Shore) st. 52 (2nd
 ed.), Starve I must, or learne to beg an ælmes.
 1611. Acts iii. 3, Who seeing Peter & Iohn
 about to go into the Temple, asked an ælmes.
 1848. KINGSLEY, *Saint's Tragedy* (1878), II.
 viii. 59, Every ælms is a fresh badge of slavery.
 1855. MACAULAY, *Hist. Eng.* IV. 265, Merely
 an ælms to be distributed among poor British
 Catholics.

c. As *plural*. (From the collective
 sense, assisted by treating the final
 -s as a plural inflection, as in *riches*.)
 Things given in charity.

1647. Bp. CORBET, *Poems* (1807), 122, His
 ælms were such as Paul defines. 1686.
 DRYDEN, *Hind & P.* iii. 106, For ælms are
 but the vehicles of prayer. 1865. *Pall*
Mall G. May 2, The Alms are thus given by
 himself to himself.

2. *fig.* A meritorious action, a
 good deed, a service to God, a chari-
 ty. Often *ironically. Obs.*

c. 1430. JN. LIDGATE, *Bochas's Falles of*
Princes (1544), Port. v. 30, It is ælmes to cor-
 recten and amend The vicious folke. 1523.
 LD. BERNERS, *Froissart*, I. ccxcv 437, It is
 a great ælmesse to confort maydens in their
 distresse. 1528. SIR T. MORE, *Heresyes*,
 I. Wks. (1557) 137f 1, It had ben great ælmes
 the priour, and thec had ben burned togyther.
 1577. A. G[OLDING], *Test. XII Patr.* 143, It
 were more ælms to let him go, & to beat you.
 1623. Bp. SANDERSON, *XXXV Serm.* (1681).
 I. 87, If he be hungry, it is ælms to feed him;
 but if he be idle and untoward, it is ælms to
 whip him.

The quotations, after being arranged under the initial letters of the words they illustrate, must next be taken in hand by careful and competent sub-editors, who proceed to combine them into word-groups, and to arrange the quotations for each word in chronological order, in some cases even going so far as to undertake all the preliminary classifications and the task of writing provisional definitions, thus leaving to the chief editor nothing but the labor of final revision and of determining the etymologies. But few volunteer sub-editors have, however, proved themselves both able and willing to discharge this duty in its fullest sense, so that this burden, added to that of general supervision and the unending correspondence it involves, rests most heavily upon the shoulders of the editor-in-chief.

As the 800,000 and odd slips thus far issued represent only a third or a fourth of the whole number which, in all probability, will be employed in the fabrication of this stupendous Dictionary, and as the oversight of the vast body of raw materials, the coördination of the results obtained by sub-editors and assistants, the chief responsibility for the etymologies propounded, and the origination or approval of every definition, must all, from the nature of the case, be devolved upon one man, it would seem only fair and reasonable that he should be enabled, by means of some public provi-

sion, to devote to the work in question the whole of his time, instead of the mere fragment which he can succeed in rescuing from the demands of an importunate profession. That such provision has not yet been made in the case of the editor is probably due to the unexampled rapidity with which the reading has gone forward; the general public have neither had time to acquaint themselves fully with the scope and magnitude of the enterprise, nor to realize its broad significance and far-reaching potencies, so that the omission, which would otherwise appear singular, is the result not so much of indifference as of surprise.

As at first projected, the Dictionary was to consist of four quarto volumes, each somewhat larger than Webster's Unabridged. A few months ago the suspicion began to be entertained that the work could not be brought within so small a compass, and it was thought advisable to make a calculation, on the basis of the materials already collected, and the specimen articles which had been put in type, with the view of ascertaining whether this suspicion was well founded. After providing for the exclusion of everything which could be rejected without impairing the usefulness of the work, and bestowing much thought upon the typographical arrangement, in order that the page should neither appear overcrowded on the one hand, nor any unnecessary sacrifice of space be permitted on the other, the Society discovered that the allowance made at the outset was by no means sufficient, and that the number of pages must be increased by at least one-half. If, on the contrary, the whole were to be compressed within the limit of four volumes, it would be necessary to reject many of the most apposite quotations, and to curtail the vast majority of the remainder to such an extent that their value for purposes of exact definition and for illustrating the history of the language would be seriously diminished.

The matter having been laid before the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, who had undertaken the publication of the Dictionary, they resolved, with characteristic wisdom and liberality, to accede to the wishes of the Society, and to permit the number of volumes to be increased by two. This action of the Delegates can hardly fail to meet with approval among English scholars and the English public on both sides of the ocean, as it would be manifestly unwise, after incurring such enormous labor and expense in behalf of the proposed Dictionary, to produce a sort of compromise between the existing lexicons and the ideal which has perhaps found its most tangible exponent in the French dictionary of Littré.

As the three years allowed for the reading have nearly expired, the Society is anxious that all help promised should be furnished without delay. Through their editor they call attention to certain special wants, and especially emphasize the lack of literary words from eighteenth century books, and of technical and scientific terms from all centuries. Since the first volume of the Dictionary may reasonably be expected within a year or two at farthest, it is self-evident that offers of assistance can not be made too speedily, and that work already in hand can not be pushed forward too energetically. If the Dictionary is to be, what is confidently expected of it, an unfailing storehouse of information for students of all grades and disciplines, it must be enriched in advance by lavish contributions from every

source. Every ascertained fact communicated within the next few months will be represented in the final product, while, on the other hand, the result of postponement to a more convenient season can only be to defraud the world, including the procrastinator himself, of the fruit which his discovery might otherwise have borne. Under these circumstances, the forcible words with which the editor closes his report will bear repetition:

"Let us make a united effort to exhaust these and every other available source of information, in order that the Dictionary may in its completeness realize the dreams of its projectors, the hopes of its workers, the expectations which have gathered round it, not only wherever the English tongue is spoken, but even in those foreign lands where our language and literature are the subject of ever-widening study and ever-deepening investigation."

ALBERT S. COOK.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

The delay in the issue of the present number is not due to any negligence on the part of the Editor, who has made every effort to have it brought out earlier. It is hoped that there will be no recurrence of the trouble.

Ample material has been secured for the first number of the new volume. The Editor hopes that the third year will be still more successful than either of its predecessors, and that the liberality of the Trustees of the Johns Hopkins University will find a still more generous response in the philological public. The price of the back volumes has been reduced, as will be seen by the advertisement.

Plaster casts of Hildebrand's bust of Friedrich Ritschl may be obtained by application to Professor O. Ribbeck, Leipzig. The price is 10 marks. The profits are devoted to the library of the Leipzig Philological Seminary.

The first part of Professor Deffner's *Zakonische Grammatik* arrived after the making up of this number of the Journal. Professor Deffner desires to state that corrections and additions will appear in a forthcoming volume of the *Archiv*.